

Case discussion

Advice on diagnosis and treatment planning for those tricky cases (including specialist areas such as fertility, cancer support etc.)

Usually, this would involve you sending some information beforehand, such as an anonymised patient intake info/Preface sheet, with details of treatment to date and a summary of progress and any questions you have.

A meeting will be booked to discuss the case and get some advice on diagnosis, treatment, referral and patient management as appropriate.

You can find specialist supporters for specific cases e.g. fertility, mental health, young people etc. Or just seek general advice for those complex knotty cases.

If you feel you need a general theory refresher, you might select one or two cases as examples to talk through, or a topic you want to focus on.

You might get together with some fellow practitioners to book a small group session where you can learn from each other's cases, just as you did when studying!

General practitioner support/mentoring

Leading and supporting the mentor/supervisor team is TAA Advisory Board member Susan Woodhead. Here, she explains a little more about what is meant by supervision and mentoring in general. Note that most of our supporters are experienced in Chinese medicine theory teaching and more suited to discussing the technicalities of diagnosis and treatment planning, and patient management. Others do have specific training in the kind of supervision and/or mentoring Susan outlines below. So again, please see the profiles for what each supporter can offer.

Supervision

Supervision is a space where someone can stand back, reflect on their work and consider areas where there is difficulty or they feel stuck. There's also a chance to look at the positive and negative effects the work has on them, a place to celebrate the good outcomes. When everything that happens in consultations is confidential, the opportunity to talk about one's practice is invaluable as we really cannot do it anywhere else.

Perhaps by dividing the word up into SUPER and VISION we can best appreciate what it can bring to us as practitioners and let go of the outdated idea that someone will be 'checking up' on us or criticizing our work. As 5 Element acupuncturists we understand VISION within the working of the Wood Element and know that growth springs from it. We also need to see and be aware of what can be present in our interactions in the treatment room. Such questions as why do we like or dislike certain people, how do we become conscious of what

is really happening therapeutically so as to understand the transference and countertransference that we are dealing with every day, and then how we can use that knowledge to become the best practitioners which is what we strive to be.

Supervision is used widely as a way of supporting those working in the helping professions to avoid burnout and stress. For acupuncturists, it is a way of continuing to develop and grow in their chosen career. The newly qualified practitioner can benefit hugely from having a supervisor in their life as they set out on their healing path.

Mentoring

In Greek mythology, Mentor was a friend of Odysseus and a guide and teacher for his son, hence the use of this term for the provision of guidance and teaching.

In modern terms a mentor is an experienced colleague who acts as a guide and teacher to one more junior. The mentoring relationship is solely for the benefit of the mentee and does not include the practitioner relationship with the clients/patients as the main focus of the session as would be the case in supervision.

Mentoring is used to provide guidance, enabling a space for reflection and encouraging good professional practice. This is usually one to one, where you meet together to consider your professional growth and development. In some ways, it can be seen as our modern way of continuing a tradition that has spanned thousands of years where apprentices learned from masters and then as they progressed they became the mentors for the following generation of acupuncturists. In the early years of your practice the experience you gain from mentoring can be invaluable.

Of course, your support may span both these approaches, and some supporters have the training to switch between the different roles to guide you in your development.